

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Teton County was established January 26, 1915 from a part of Madison County, with its county seat at Driggs. It was named for the adjacent Teton Mountains and valley. The valley was formerly known as Pierre's Hole, named by Vieux Pierre who visited the area in 1812. The County is a significant recreational and tourism resource for the State of Idaho. As the access the Grand Targhee Ski Resort though located in Teton County WY it is the largest private employer in the County, and with its proximity to National Forests (Caribou-Targhee and Bridger-Teton), National and State Parks (Grand Teton, Yellowstone and Harriman), visitor amenities, activities and services are of great importance to the County economics and development.

During the past 40 years, residents and visitors to Teton County have experienced numerous wildfires, flooding, landslides, earthquakes, severe winter storms, and hurricane force windstorms, greatly impacting life and property within the County.

The population of Teton County was determined to be over 3,000 for the 1990 census, and had more than doubled to over 6,000 individuals by the 200 census; a 100% increase.

1.1 Plan Methodology

The Teton County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan was initiated by the Teton County Commissioners, Teton County, Idaho in May 2003.

The Commissioners required that the plan:

- Coordinate with the Idaho State Strategic Plan for the implementation of the National Fire Plan, and
- Utilize the format developed for all hazard mitigation plans provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The Teton County Plan is based on information, research, and data from numerous County, State, Federal and private sources. Teton County contracted Dynamac Corporation as the coordinator of the Teton County Wildfire Group and plan developer.

The Teton County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan was developed by the Teton County Wildfire Group (TCWFG). This group consisted of numerous Teton County residents, Teton County Fire Fighters, County Fire Chief and Teton County Fire Marshall, home owners representatives, private land owners, Teton County Planning and Zoning, Teton County Disaster Coordinator, Teton County Sheriff, Teton County Road & Bridge Department, State of Idaho Disaster Services, Foresters and Fire Managers of the Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Fish and Game, District Rangers, Land Managers and Fire/Fuels Managers of the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Organizational structure was managed under a modified Incident Command System (ICS) for optimal information exchange and hazard identification throughout the County. (Appendix C, Teton County Wildfire Group Participation).

The Teton County Wildfire Group conducted monthly meetings from July 2003 through January 2004. Group Supervisors met with Team Leaders weekly or bi-monthly. Development of the Teton County Wildfire Mitigation Plan was achieved through input to and from the County Wildfire Group. (Appendix C, Monthly Meeting Reports). The local newspaper, "Teton Valley News", published progress and informative articles after each TCWFG meeting including the phone number and email address for public input, and participation.

Numerous wildfire hazard questionnaires were distributed and completed by residents of the County. An example of the questionnaire and collated responses are located in Appendix B. Numerous stakeholder interviews were conducted. A list of Teton County stakeholders interviewed is also in Appendix C. Evaluation were made for wildfire hazards on WUI areas at risk in Teton County relating to their fuels type, condition, density, combined with slope, aspect and soil stability. This rating system identified wildfire hazard areas throughout the county as low, moderate, high and extreme. Survivable space and structure evaluations were conducted by Dynamac Corporation Fire Specialist and the Teton County Fire Department using NFPA 299 and NFPA 1144 hazard severity formats.

2.0 TETON COUNTY PROFILE

2.1 Geography

Teton County, Idaho consists of approximately 459 square miles (294,012 acres). Most of the County is in private holdings (65%), with Federal or State managed lands constituting approximately 34% of the County. The remaining 1% of land base consists of waterways (Appendix A, Map 1, Land Status). The topography ranges from the high elevation (6,000 ft. average) Teton Basin that drains the Teton River and its tributaries, to the Big Hole Mountains in the southwest portion of the County, where peaks reach 9,000 ft Appendix A, Map2, Topography and Geographic Features). Counties that border Teton County include Bonneville, Madison, and Fremont Counties, as well as the State of Wyoming's own Teton County.

2.2 Current Population and Population Trends

The population of Teton County is approximately 6,000 (2000 census), which represents a 100% population increase since 1990, when the recorded census was just over 3,000. Teton County experiences a significant seasonal increase in population brought about by summer vacationers. This segment of the county's population has been estimated to be between 30% and 50% above the base population. Using census numbers to reflect the